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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 WARSAW 000078

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - DELETED COMMENT AND PARA 8

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S FAREWELL CALL ON SEJM SPEAKER
KOMOROWSKI

REF: 08 WARSAW 1250

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Classified By: Ambassador Ashe for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY. In a January 22 meeting, Sejm (lower house of parliament) Speaker Bronislaw Komorowski asked about the possible timing of an Administration decision on Missile Defense and expressed confidence that the U.S.-Polish relationship would continue to flourish. Komorowski expressed regret that PM Tusk had decided to accept Justice Minister Cwiakalski's resignation, but strongly supported the newly appointed Andrzej Czuma, a "principled man" whom he had encouraged to return to politics. Komorowski predicted that the results of June 2009 European Parliament elections would mirror the Sejm's current make-up, stating that the main government coalition party, Civic Platform (PO), would continue to be a "pragmatic defender" of European integration and to advocate stronger trans-Atlantic ties. On private property restitution/compensation, Komorowski said Tusk was determined to press forward with legislation despite new challenges posed by the economic crisis, but did not provide timing details. As reported reftel, Komorowski plans to travel to Washington in March or April to discuss Poland's concerns about the Visa Waiver Program. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) In a January 22 farewell call, Sejm Speaker Bronislaw Komorowski thanked the Ambassador for his efforts on behalf of U.S.-Polish relations, telling the Ambassador that he had been "Poland's true friend" for the past four-and-a-half years. The Ambassador expressed appreciation for Poland's contributions in Iraq and Afghanistan and for Komorowski's commitment to the U.S.-Polish partnership. Komorowski asked the Ambassador when the Administration expects to complete its Missile Defense feasibility review and expressed hope that the USG would consult closely with the GoP. "Regardless of who governs, I am confident the U.S.-Polish friendship will remain strong," Komorowski said. The Ambassador noted that the new U.S.-Poland Parliamentary Youth Exchange Program would further strengthen ties between the two countries.

NEW JUSTICE MINISTER

13. (C) Minutes before the meeting, PM Tusk announced the appointment of Civic Platform (PO) MP Andrzej Czuma to the position of Justice Minister. (NB: Former Justice Minister Zbigniew Cwiakalski resigned January 20 following the suicide of a prisoner convicted in the brutal murder of Krzysztof Olewnik in 2003. Two other prisoners convicted in the same case committed suicide in 2008.) Komorowski noted that he and Czuma were "old friends" who had worked together in the anti-Communist underground (NB: Komorowski and Czuma were imprisoned together for three months in 1980.) Komorowski pointed out that Czuma had lived for twenty years in Chicago,

where he ran a Polish radio station. He noted that Czuma's underground code-name had been "Pomnik" (monument), a testament to his willingness to go to prison rather than compromise his principles.

14. (C) Komorowski claimed responsibility for convincing Czuma to return to Polish politics, and said his political experience would help him deal with daunting challenges. He is a "principled man" who will stand up for his ministry despite "the public's demand for blood" in the wake of the flawed prosecution -- years ago -- of the Olewnik case. His support for Czuma notwithstanding, Komorowski hinted his dissatisfaction with the PM's decision to accept the resignation of Cwiakalski. He asserted that the problems in the Olewnik case (both the shoddy criminal investigation and the subsequent prisoner suicides) were the result of incompetence and many errors, but "not a criminal conspiracy as the public believes."

POLAND'S ROLE IN EUROPE

15. (C) Komorowski said that while Poles are beginning to experience the consequences of the global economic crisis, he expects no serious political fall-out from it before June 2009 elections to the European Parliament. As a result, Komorowski predicted, the EP election results are likely to reflect the current political alignment in the Sejm. He anticipated that PO would win approximately half of Poland's 50 seats (NB: PO currently has 16, out of 54), which would considerably strengthen PO's position in the European Peoples' Party (EPP) bloc. (NB: Senate Speaker Bogdan Borusewicz (PO) expressed similar views in the Ambassador's January 22 farewell call. Borusewicz predicted that small political groupings on the left and the right would "disappear" after failing to surpass the 5% threshold for representation. Borusewicz anticipated a 30-to-40% turnout.) In advance of EP elections, PO plans to project itself as a

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"pragmatic defender" of European integration, but will also be "realistic" in defending Poland's interests. In addition, Komorowski said, the PO will emphasize the need to strengthen trans-Atlantic cooperation.

PRIVATE PROPERTY RESTITUTION

16. (C) On prospects for passing legislation on compensation for private property confiscated in WWII and the Communist era, Komorowski expressed concern that the financial crisis had presented "new circumstances." Nevertheless, Komorowski said, PM Tusk is determined to force intransigent ministers, especially the Agriculture and Environment Ministries, to contribute to a compensation fund by selling government-owned real estate, including forests. "We have to look for extra funds" because of declining property values. Komorowski reiterated that Tusk was determined to move forward with the legislation. Komorowski hinted that the ten-year repayment plan envisioned in the current draft legislation would be a "safety mechanism." He said it was absolutely essential to start the process, but did not specify when the legislation would be introduced in parliament.

TRAVEL NOTE

17. (C) Per Komorowski's chief of staff, the Speaker plans to travel to the United States in the March/April timeframe to raise Poland's concerns about the Visa Waiver Program with Members of Congress.

ASHE